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A BRIEF
HISTORY

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

IN GOFFSTOWN, N. H.,

BEING PART OF A

SERMON PREACHED BY

Samuel L. Gerould, Pastor,

JULY 9. 1876,

WITH A FEW LATER ADDITIONS.

BRISTOL, N. H.:
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Class _____

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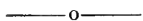
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HISTORY.



This town was settled in 1741 or 1742, and was chartered June 17, 1761. The people at that time were, as in all New England towns, a church-going people. It was considered disreputable to be habitually absent from divine service on the Sabbath. Accordingly we find that, as soon as possible after receiving their charter, measures were taken to secure the ministrations of the gospel. At the first annual town meeting, held at the barn of Thomas Karr (where the meetings were convened for many years), it was "Voted, that £100 be raised for preaching," and Dea. Thomas Karr and Asa Pattee were appointed a committee to expend it. It was also "Voted, that half the preaching be at James Karr's and the other half at John Smith's." It is probable that all the public religious services of that day were held in barns, as we find by a vote in March, 1763, that it was the will of the town that the preaching for that year be at James Karr's barn. At the same meeting £100 was appropriated for preaching. At the annual meeting March 5, 1764, £300 was appropriated, and it was "Voted that £200 be preached out at John Smith's, and the other £100 thereof be equally divided on each side of the Piscataquog river." The next year the same amount was appropriated, but the services were all to be held "at Thomas Karr's barn." In 1766 the amount voted for preaching was reduced to £150, and the selectmen were instructed to expend it. In 1767 only £9 was voted for this purpose, but as £3 was all that was raised for town charges, it is probable that the difference was owing to the shrinkage of the currency. Two somewhat curious votes stand side by side in connection with the annual meeting of this year, which will serve to show the changes time and truth have wrought. The one is "that the town support no school this year;" the other that it "pay for the room used at the bridge by the Mast fordway."

It will have been observed that the town, rather than individuals, supported public worship at this time. The towns also erected the meeting-houses. The Congregationalists were the "standing order," and so all the tax-payers, for many years, contributed to the support of this denomination. There was a provision, however, by which those conscientiously opposed to this order, and in favor of some other, could be released by the selectmen, in which cases their taxes went to support the denomination to which they were attached. There were many Presbyterians, some Anabaptists, as they were called, and a few Episcopalians, that, in this manner, were released from supporting the Congregationalists. But all voters must pay their proportion towards the support of some religious worship, and for many years the town assessed and collected all moneys expended for this object. Various sums were yearly voted by the town for this purpose, until the formation of a church and the settlement of a pastor, when the sum was usually voted by the church, but assessed and collected by the town.

The Congregational Church was organized Oct. 30, 1771. Its records, for the first ten years of its existence, were destroyed by fire many years since, so it is impossible to give its strength or say very much about it, for that time. The names of eighteen persons, incidentally mentioned, who must have been members, have been culled from the subsequent records; and, as most of these are names of men, it is safe to presume that more than fifty must have been added to the church during this period.

It is probable that a Presbyterian church or society was formed very soon after, for in an old record book of the Londonderry Presbytery, lost for many years, but recently discovered in one of the antiquarian bookstores of Boston, is this record from the minutes of a meeting held at Newburyport, Mass., May 13, 1772: "Ordered that a certificate be delivered to the Presbyterian society of Goffstown, manifesting their being under the care of this Presbytery." The Presbyterians held a service, more or less, every year in private houses and barns, but never had a meeting house, nor a settled minister, although a certain Mr. Pidgin preached for them some time. Very little can be ascertained in regard to this church. In the town records, under date of April 16, 1781, fifty-six names of males are appended to a declaration that they are Presbyterians.

It is possible that not until this year did they become a separate, legal parish, though relieved from paying "rates" in 1773.

From the beginning there were some Anabaptists, as they were then called, whose "parish rates," at their request, were applied to the support of Baptist preaching at Hopkinton, where they attended till 1793. During this year a church of this order was formed in town, though it had hardly more than a name to live until it was reorganized in 1820. They were without a house of worship till 1834, when the present structure was erected.

There were also a very few Episcopalians, whose parish rates were applied at Newburyport, Mass. How often these persons worshipped in that place we have no means of knowing, but they hardly could have gone so far more than once or twice in a year. The town records have this entry under date of March 7, 1791.—"This certifies that Capt. John Butterfield hath joined the Episcopal Society in Goffstown, and means to support the gospel in that mode of worship. (Signed) John Smith, John Clogston, Wardens." Under date of March 4, 1793, is this record—"This may certify all persons whom it may concern, that Mr. Enoch Eaton of Goffstown professes himself to be a member of the Episcopal church now erected in said town, and has helped to maintain the gospel in that line for some time past, as, witness our hands, Job Dow, John Butterfield, John Smith, Wm. McDougal, Wardens." From this it would appear that there was at that time an Episcopal church or society in this town, but I have been unable to discover other evidence of it.

As early as 1766 the inhabitants began to move for the building of a place of worship. At a town meeting held Sept. 29th of this year it was "Voted, that the meeting-house be built on the south side of the river on the convenientest place in the crotch of the roads as they lead from the bridge to the Mast road." This is very near where the Baptist church now stands. It was also "Voted, that the house be forty-four feet long, thirty-eight feet wide, and twenty-two feet post," and that "it be raised, boarded and shingled by the first day of October next." But the question of the two sides of the river disturbed our fathers, as it has their children, and the opposition to this vote was so strong that the committee

did nothing. The town was also about evenly divided upon another question. The settlers on the north side of the river were mostly Congregationalists; those on the south side were mainly Presbyterians. The latter, in getting a vote to build on their side of the river, gained a temporary triumph. But the votes were soon rescinded. The next July the town voted to build a smaller house "near Dea. Karr's shop," which vote was rescinded at the following March meeting, in 1768. But our fathers evidently were becoming wearied with this contention, and so at this meeting fixed upon the location, and empowered Samuel Richards, Enoch Page, Wm. McDoell, Asa Pattee, Joshua Martin, Job Rowell and Thomas Karr to build the house "according to their own mind."

On the 27th of April, 1768, the house which most of us remember, standing near the school-house at the Center, and which was taken down in 1869, was raised. It was not completed for several years. Various sums were appropriated from year to year for this purpose. It was occupied as a place of worship as soon as shingled and boarded. In August, 1769, the "pew ground" in the body of the building was sold at a "vendue," and the avails were used toward completing the house. The names of the purchasers at that time were Samuel Blodgett, Wm. Gilchrist, Robert Gilmore, Capt. James Karr, Dea. Thomas Karr, Job Kidder, Joseph Little, Capt. John Mack, Daniel McFarland, Samuel McFarland, Asa Pattee, Samuel Richards, Benjamin Stevens and Moses Wells. The "vendue" occupied two days and was probably accompanied with considerable discussion. Others afterwards secured "pew ground," until most of the body of the house was sold.

The second house of worship in town was erected in 1815 and 1816, and was dedicated July 3, 1816; Rev. John H. Church, D.D., of Pelham, preaching the sermon. It stood upon or very near the present site of Mr. Samuel M. Christie's house. It was quite a large building, with galleries on three sides, and had a bell. After its erection services were held in this house two-thirds of the time, the other third being in the old house at the Center. In 1845 it taken down and moved away.

The third meeting-house was built in 1838, which was the one occupied by the Methodists, and which was struck by lightning and burned a few years since. The old meeting-house had become

quite dilapidated and uncomfortable, and a new one, upon which the town should have no claim, was very much needed. Besides this there was a feeling on the part of those living in the Center and east part of the town, that they were not receiving so many privileges as the west village, a large part of the preaching being at the latter place. They were also hoping to form a parish of their own, and so have sanctuary privileges every Sabbath. Their desires, however, were not realized, and in 1842 the house was sold to parties by whom the Methodist church was organized.

During the pastorate of Rev. Isaac Willey, and largely through his influence, the present house of worship was erected, at a cost of about \$2,500.* It was dedicated in October, 1845, from which time all the Sabbath services were held in this house. Its seating capacity was increased in 1869 by the addition of twenty-eight pews.

A parsonage, costing, complete, about \$2,700, was built in 1870, and a chapel or vestry, for the social meetings of the church, was erected in 1875, at an expense of \$2,750.

Having spoken of the houses of worship, we naturally next come to the ministers of the gospel. A history of the ministers of olden time is largely a history of the church over which they were settled. There was then, on the part of church members, very little of what we now call religious activity. Such a thing as a layman talking religion or praying, otherwise than in his own family was hardly known. About the only public expression of religious life consisted in attending the two very long preaching services on the Sabbath, being punctual at the communion, and presenting ones children for baptism. Upon all these points they were very strict. The church was, therefore, more largely than now, what its pastor made it.

At a town meeting held Aug. 31, 1769, it was "Voted, that we keep Mr. Currier four days," meaning, probably, four Sabbaths. It is likely he had already preached several Sabbaths, being employed by the committee for that year, and that the town, with a view to his settlement, wished to hear him longer, as we find that, on the 24th of October following, a committee was appointed to treat with him in regard to settlement. On the 13th of February,

*This was the cost in money. Had time and labor been reckoned the amount would have been largely increased.

1770, a formal call to settle in the ministry was voted him by the town. But for some reason it was not accepted. It was renewed July 29, 1771, and was accepted the 17th of August following. He was to have, as a settlement, the use of a certain tract of land, reserved by the proprietors of the town for that purpose, and £40 a year the first five years, £45 the next three years and £50 a year after eight years. His salary was to be paid, one-half in corn and the other half in labor. He was ordained Oct. 30, 1771, the same day the church was organized. Mr. Currier was settled by the town rather than by the church. The ordaining council, which also recognized the church, was composed of Rev. Daniel Emerson of Hollis, Rev. Henry True of Hampstead, and Rev. Gyles Merrill of Plaistow, chosen by the town, besides five chosen by Mr. Currier whose names are not given. His ministry was a brief one for those days, a little short of three years. He was very intemperate in his habits, and was dismissed by the town and church Aug. 29, 1774, without the advice of a council. Probably he did not care to appear before one.

Rev. Joseph Currier was born in Amesbury, Mass., March 18, 1743; was graduated at Harvard College in 1765, and studied theology in private. After his dismissal from this church he removed to Corinth, Vt., where he died July 24, 1829, aged 86.

This town shared in the burdens of the Revolutionary war, furnishing seventy-four men for the army, besides large quantities of beef (13,000 lbs. at one time) assigned them by the government, as its quota. For this reason, probably, after Mr. Currier left, there was no stated preaching, but only occasional supplies, till 1781. The fact that the Presbyterians and Anabaptists had been relieved April 19, 1773, from paying their rates for Congregational preaching may have had something to do with it.

On the 27th of Dec. 1781, Cornelius Waters was ordained and installed pastor of this church, the call having been voted the 23d of August previous. In this transaction the town had no part. The churches in Sutton, Amherst, Merrimack, Pembroke, Plaistow, Atkinson, Hollis, Concord, Warner, Hopkinton, and Hampstead were invited on the council. As preparing the way for his coming and his success in his ministry, the church observed the first day of December as a day of fasting and prayer. Rev. Henry True

of Hampstead was Moderator of the Council, and Rev. Jeremiah Barnard of Amherst scribe. Mr. True gave the charge to the pastor, Rev. Jacob Burnap, D.D., of Merrimack, gave the fellowship of the churches, Rev. Gyles Merrill of Plaistow the ordaining prayer, and Rev. Elijah Fletcher of Hopkinton the concluding prayer.

He received a settlement of £100, and a salary of £70 a year for the first five years, and £80 thereafter. He seems to have been a very worthy man. During his ministry, fifty-seven were added to the church and thirty-three "owned the Covenant." During the latter part of his pastorate there were dissensions in the church. A council was called for their settlement, but they were not settled. A day of fasting and prayer was appointed, but the difficulties continued. Mr. Currier was too loose in his habits, and Mr. Waters by some was thought too strict. The lovers of ardent spirits were determined he should leave. So he asked a dismissal, which was granted May 4, 1795, after a ministry of fourteen years. To the record is appended the following:—"Notandum Bene. The vote accepting his resignation was passed in the east end of the meeting-house on the common, at the time of the annual parish meeting by adjournment, and the church condescended to do it to quell the violence, rage and confusion which prevailed in a distracted party of the church and parish in the parish meeting." The opposition won the day, which was all they cared for, as the leaders ceased attending meeting or helping in the support of worship so that after three years it was found necessary to expel them.

Cornelius Waters, the second pastor of this church, was born in Millbury, Mass., May 12, 1749; graduated at Dartmouth College in 1774. Like Mr. Currier he studied theology in private. From here he removed to Ashby, Mass., where he was installed in 1797 and dismissed in 1816. He continued to reside in Ashby till his death, July 30, 1824.

After the expulsion from the church of those disaffected with Mr. Waters, the sober, second judgment of the people convinced them they had *all* done wrong. There had been much hard feeling between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. An unholy strife for members had been carried on by both churches. A day of fasting and prayer was appointed, and the Christian people

were humbled. A vote was passed by the Congregational church that they would, thereafter, be more careful in the reception of members. The result, in a few words, was that a "plan of union" between the two churches was adopted Dec. 29, 1801, and they became one, under the name of the Presbyterian-Congregational Church of Goffstown. The Government was to be according to the Congregational polity, with the right of appeal to Presbytery or Mutual Council, as the parties might elect.

Up to 1790 the Half Way Covenant seems to have been in use. This was an arrangement by which adults, whose outward lives were correct, by "owning the covenant," were permitted to receive the rite of baptism themselves, and present their children for this ordinance. We have the names of thirty-eight persons who were admitted under this covenant. It made bad work with religion wherever it was adopted, as it was virtually a letting down of the bars of the church to any who chose to come in in this way, without any personal interest in the Saviour of sinners. This Half Way Covenant was originally promulgated in 1662, by a Council convened in Boston by the General Court of Massachusetts, to settle existing difficulties in the churches. The reason for its adoption was, because at that time none but baptized persons could vote. But it was adopted or was in use in many places, as here, a long time after this reason had ceased to exist, so far as applied to town affairs. All who "owned the Covenant" could, however, vote on church affairs, and much trouble was sometimes made in consequence. It seems gradually to have fallen into disuse in this place as, ever after the union of the two churches, the church members regulated their own affairs as now; except that in the matter of choosing and dismissing pastors, the act of the church must be accepted by the parish, as now by the society.

Upon the adoption of the plan of union, Dec. 29, 1801, a call was extended to Mr. David Lawrence Morrill "to settle with us in the work of the gospel ministry," and he was ordained and installed March 3, 1802. He received a settlement of \$300 and an annual salary of \$300. For the purpose of meeting the desires of the Presbyterians, six elders were appointed, namely, John Richardson, Jona. Stevens, Thomas Warren, Thomas Shirley, Thomas Kennedy and Robert Moore, the last three having been, originally,

Presbyterians. John Taggart and William Story were soon after added. The ministry of Mr. Morrill was, on the whole, a successful one, for he was a man of prudence, ability and piety, and so won the confidence of the entire community. Thirty-four were added to the church during his pastorate. The Presbyterian and Congregational elements, however, were not quite in harmony, and many of the former withdrew in 1803. Intemperance prevailed in the church to an alarming extent, but, to the credit of the church be it said, every case was met by discipline. Mr. Morrill's health having become poor, or rather his voice failing him, he resigned his charge and closed his labors Nov. 4, 1809. His resignation was not acted upon by a council till July 10, 1811. It is probable that in the intervening time he occasionally preached. From this time till the latter part of 1818 there was no regular preaching, although the town appropriated for this purpose in 1816 the sum of \$200, the society the same amount in 1817, and \$150 in 1819.

David Lawrence Morrill was born in Epping, June 10, 1772. He never went to college; but studied theology with Rev. Jesse Remington of Candia. In 1808 he received the degrees of A. M. and M. D. from Dartmouth College, and in 1825 the degree of LL.D. from the University of Vermont. He continued to reside in this town for many years after his dismissal, in the practice of medicine, and was moderator and clerk of the church until another pastor was chosen. He represented the town in the Legislature from 1810 to 1816, inclusive, the latter year being Speaker of the House. The same year he was elected to the United States Senate for six years from March 4, 1817. He was also Governor of the State in 1824-5. He removed to Concord in the autumn of 1831, where he engaged in the book trade, and where he died Jan. 27, 1849.

In 1816 an Ecclesiastical Society was organized for the support of Congregational worship, called the Religious Union Society, which was incorporated Dec. 11, 1816. This remains until this day.

In 1819 a call was extended to Mr. Hosea Wheeler which was declined.

In the spring and summer of 1819 the place was blessed with a

very powerful revival under the preaching of Rev. Abel Manning. Sixty-eight were received into the church in the year 1819; the largest number ever received in any one year. In the "History of the New Hampshire Churches," Rev. E. H. Richardson says of this revival "There were a few women whose persevering prayers, in the midst of great obstacles, were answered in this revival of religion. They *prayed* it into existence."

Benjamin Henry Pitman was ordained Oct. 18, 1820, for the term of five years. During his ministry, in 1822, the Religious Union Society received by will of Thomas W. Thompson, one hundred seventy acres of land, the avails of which were to be used for the support of a Congregational minister. Mr. Pitman had many warm friends, and he was earnestly requested to remain longer than his five years, but he declined. He was dismissed Nov. 15, 1825. The following incident occurred during his ministry which illustrates the difference between those times and these. In the autumn of 1825, the bog road, so called, was built, and Mr. Pitman, as road surveyor for one of the districts, had charge of a certain part. Strong drink was freely used at that time, and thought no sin, provided one did not take enough to overcome him. On this occasion Mr. Pitman did, and as a consequence got into a quarrel with some of his men. But, to his honor be it said, he afterwards sought and obtained the forgiveness of the individuals and of the church—for the quarrel,—not for the drinking. The bibulous propensities of the inhabitants at that time were strongly developed. Shall I give you the names of those licensed by the town to mix and sell liquors that year? They were Daniel Farmer, Robert Hall, Jona. Butterfield, Gideon Flanders, Parker & Whittle, John Smith, Ephraim Warren, Daniel M. Shirley, Eliphalet Richards and John Little.

Mr. Pitman was born in Newport, R. I., Nov. 28, 1789; received neither a college nor a seminary education; but probably studied theology in private. On leaving this place he returned to Newport, R. I. He died March 8, 1868. I cannot ascertain whether he ever preached after leaving this place.

It will have appeared that there was need of a temperance reformation in this place. "When the enemy cometh in like a flood" we have the promise that "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a

standard against him." It was just about this time, 1826, when the temperance reformation in this country commenced. A few had received the light, but most were in darkness. Rev. Henry Wood, who followed Mr. Pitman, was a total abstinence man. He was ordained May 31, 1826. Through his exertions and that of a few of the church, a vote was passed that year discountenancing the use of liquor at funerals. That was as far as they could go at that time, as rum was used upon every occasion by nearly every person. It was always set before the minister when he made his parish calls. But so much advance had been made under Mr. Wood that, in the winter of 1829-30, a vote was passed by the church testifying against the use of liquors in any form, except as medicine. It is not to be inferred from this that every member of the church had become a teetotaler, but that the light was breaking and the temperance cause advancing. Mr. Wood was not only a temperance man, he was a spiritual man, whom many with us to-day remember with tender interest. His ministry was blessed with revivals, one hundred fifty-two being added to the church. He seems to have left on account of inadequate support. He was dismissed Nov. 29, 1831.

He was born in London, April 10, 1796. Was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1822, where he was tutor the following year. He studied theology at Princeton, 1823-4, and was Professor of Languages in Hampton Sidney College, Va., 1825, from which institution he received the degree of D.D. in 1867. After his dismissal from this church, Nov. 30, 1831, he preached three and a half years in Haverhill, five and a half years in Hanover, edited the *Congregational Journal* at Concord for fourteen years, preached at Canaan two years, was U. S. Consul in Syria and Palestine four years, and Chaplain U. S. N. from 1858 until his death at Philadelphia, Oct. 9, 1873.

On the day after Mr. Wood was dismissed Rev. David Stowell was ordained. The ministry of the former closed and that of the latter commenced in the midst of a revival. It is somewhat remarkable that all the discussions in regard to raising Mr. Wood's salary, some of which were heated, did not have the effect of driving away the Holy Spirit—but doubtless there were fervent prayers continually ascending that He might continue to abide with them.

These facts teach this truth, that a revival does not depend upon any one man, not even upon the minister. Mr. Stowell was a strong temperance man, and dealt its enemies many heavy blows.

A sermon which he preached in this place forty-one years ago, and which was printed, is said to be a fair example of his style. He was dismissed Dec. 15, 1836; the cause assigned in his letter of resignation being ill health. This letter is full of tenderness and affection, and a hearty vote of confidence in him was afterwards passed by the church.

Mr. Stowell was born in Westmoreland, Dec. 29, 1804, graduated at Dartmouth College in 1829; studied theology in private. Before coming here he taught the Derry Academy two years. He went from here to Townsend, Mass., where he was installed pastor, June 28, 1837. While there the fellowship of the churches was withdrawn from him, on account of alleged misconduct. He went to Fitzwilliam and engaged in farming for a number of years, and died there March 29, 1854.

All the pastors who have thus far been named have passed to their reward. Most of them were good and faithful men, though not without their faults. They are now seeing the fruits of their labors, as they could not see them here. In most cases the seed they sowed was good, it was watered with their prayers and tears, but it did not spring up till they had passed away. It very often occurs that God sends one generation into the world to sow seed the harvest of which another generation shall gather.

We come now to the ministry of Rev. Isaac Willey, who was installed Nov. 23, 1837. He was the first pastor of this church who had ever had a previous settlement. He came here from Rochester where he was ordained Jan. 18, 1826, and dismissed in 1834.

His pastorate here extended over nearly seventeen years, the longest term of any.

Just after Mr. Willey's settlement, as he was engaged to preach all the time at the west village, the members of the church living at the Center, and in the east part of the town, to the number of sixty-four, feeling that they were neglected by the removal of the meetings to the west village, sought letters of dismission for the purpose of forming a church of their own at the Center. They applied to Mr. Wallace, before he was settled at Manchester, to preach

for them. If we may judge from the votes passed at that time, this request was entertained in a Christian spirit, without any attempt to force them to remain. The result was, their petitions were withdrawn, and an arrangement was made by which Mr. Willey was to preach one third of the time at their new house.

During Mr. Willey's ministry, his house, situated where David Grant's now stands, was burned in the dead of night, with most of its contents; and he and his family, ten in number, were left without a shelter. In this fire many of the valuable papers and records of the church were destroyed. His pecuniary loss was largely made up to him through the liberality of friends in this and adjoining towns.

From the "History of the New Hampshire Churches," I make this extract. "In the beginning of 1841, a woman in the character of a preacher came to this town, and held meetings almost daily. Her hearers increased until the large church (the old church at the Center) holding nearly one thousand persons, was filled. She professed no connection with any existing church, and was sustained for a time by persons who had been expelled from the Congregational and Baptist churches. In the following spring, 1842, more than one half the voters in town, and nearly all those who had never been willing to support any other preacher, came to her support. A number of persons, who had made a profession of piety hastily, were drawn off from each of the churches. The excitement occasioned by her preaching after a few months declined."

This event seems to have caused great fear to the church. There was, however, hardly any occasion for it. Had the church let it entirely alone doubtless the excitement would have passed away sooner than it did. It sometimes requires a highly sanctified human nature and common sense to let such things alone. The advice of Gamaliel to the people, after the excitement produced by Peter's preaching, is often worth following in these days:—"Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Fifty-five were added to the church during Mr. Willey's ministry; but his work is not to be measured alone by this standard. He closed his labors March 27, 1853, but was not formally dismissed till May 17, 1854.

He was born in Campton, Sept. 8, 1793; was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1822, and studied theology at Andover with the class of 1825, and also with Rev. Benet Tyler, D.D. After completing his labors here, he was appointed Agent of the American Bible Society for New Hampshire, retaining his home here until 1865, when he removed to Pembroke, where he now resides.

A call was extended by the church and society in 1854 to Mr. Franklin Tuxbury, but it was not accepted.

The next pastor was Rev. Elias H. Richardson. He was born in Lebanon, Aug. 11, 1827; was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1850; at Andover Theological Seminary in 1853. He was ordained pastor of this church May 18, 1854, and was dismissed Oct. 30, 1856. Subsequently he was pastor at Dover seven years; at Providence, R. I., three years; at Westfield, Mass., five years; at Hartford, Conn., seven years, and was settled at New Britain, Conn., in 1878, where he now is. He received the degree of D.D. from his *alma mater* in 1876.

Rev. John W. Ray became acting pastor April 1, 1857. He was invited to settle but declined. He closed his labors May 1, 1867. He was born in Chester, Dec. 23, 1814; was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1843. Previous to his coming here he had been a teacher in Atkinson Academy; Manchester High School; at Eastport, Me.; at Merrimack Normal Institute; at Pinkerton Academy, Derry; and also pastor at Rockville, Ct. Since leaving here he has been acting pastor at Hastings and Lake City, Minn., being now at the latter place.

Mr. Charles A. Towle was called to the pastorate in 1868, but declined.

Your present pastor was born in New, now East Alstead, July 11, 1834; was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1858; studied theology two years at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, in the class of 1861; was ordained pastor at Stoddard, Oct. 2, 1861, and installed pastor of this church, Feb. 4, 1869, having commenced his labors two months previously.

A roll of the church from the beginning had never been kept. Within a few years one has been made, as accurate as possible, and it now has upward of 800 names. Without doubt it should contain from twenty to fifty more, who were members from 1771 to

1781, but the records are lost. The eighteen names we have were found scattered through the subsequent records, where reference was made to them.

There have been seasons of revival and of depression in the history of this church. Several important revivals has it enjoyed : in 1802, under Mr. Morril ; in 1819, under Mr. Manning ; in 1826-7-8, under Mr. Wood ; in 1831-2, under Messrs. Wood and Stowell ; in 1835, under Mr. Stowell ; in 1864, under Mr. Ray ; and the one in 1875. Two fifths of all the additions to the church from the beginning have occurred in these years. Against these occasions of rejoicing, we must place other seasons of depression and trial, when the hand of God has seemed to be against us because of our sins—when there were dissensions within, and trouble without, when the prevailing iniquity of the place seemed to render futile all efforts to bring about a better state of things, and when defection, intemperance and worldliness seemed about to rend the church in pieces. God, having planted the vine, would not leave it to be destroyed. When its uprootal seemed imminent, He watched it with tenderest care ; when the soil about it had become dry and hard, He watered it with the Holy Spirit. It has been with it as with the church of God from the beginning : there have been times when it seemed as though it would die, but it has never died,—it never can die so long as there remain in it those who are true to their Master and to each other. We still live because “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

There has been progress. The advance may not have been seen from year to year, but we can see it now. Within the memory of those now living a member of this church sought a letter of dismission and recommendation to a Methodist church, which was met by the appointment of a committee to discipline her. To-day we should all have said to a similar request “Go and God be with you.”

In early times the services of the sanctuary were very lengthy—the two sermons were each about an hour long—as often running over this time as coming under. The prayers were very long—the “long prayer” so called not usually less than thirty minutes. Between services the people went to the “nooning house” where they warmed themselves at a huge fire of logs, and with flip and

eider. Here also they ate their brown bread, or beans, or other refreshment they had brought with them. Here the women filled their dishes with coals for their foot stoves: No other artificial heat was tolerated in the house of God for many years, and when at last stoves were introduced there was, upon the part of the conservatives, a great outcry: they claimed they were uncomfortable because they were comfortable, and they predicted the judgment of heaven because of the sacreligious innovation. There were no prayer-meetings in those early days, no Sabbath schools, almost no books or newspapers. The Sabbath services furnished about all the mental food the people had, save what they received from the Bible.

The first notice we have of a prayer-meeting in this place was in 1826, Aug. 16, when one was appointed by the church, and neighboring ministers were invited to attend, and aid in carrying it on. April 5, 1838, a monthly prayer-meeting was established, and June 9, 1844, it was made a weekly meeting. It was evidently given up sometime after, as a vote is recorded Jan. 7, 1847, reviving it. Let it not be inferred there was no praying by God's people before this, because there was not social prayer. Our fathers did not know its power and its blessedness. They acted according to the light they had. Surely there has been progress here.

The first notice of Sabbath schools was in 1821, when several were appointed in the various school houses of the town upon Sabbath afternoons. Of what the exercises consisted, we have no account, but probably of little more than the memorizing the Bible and the Catechism. When the Sabbath school was introduced as a part of the regular services of the sanctuary, I am not informed.

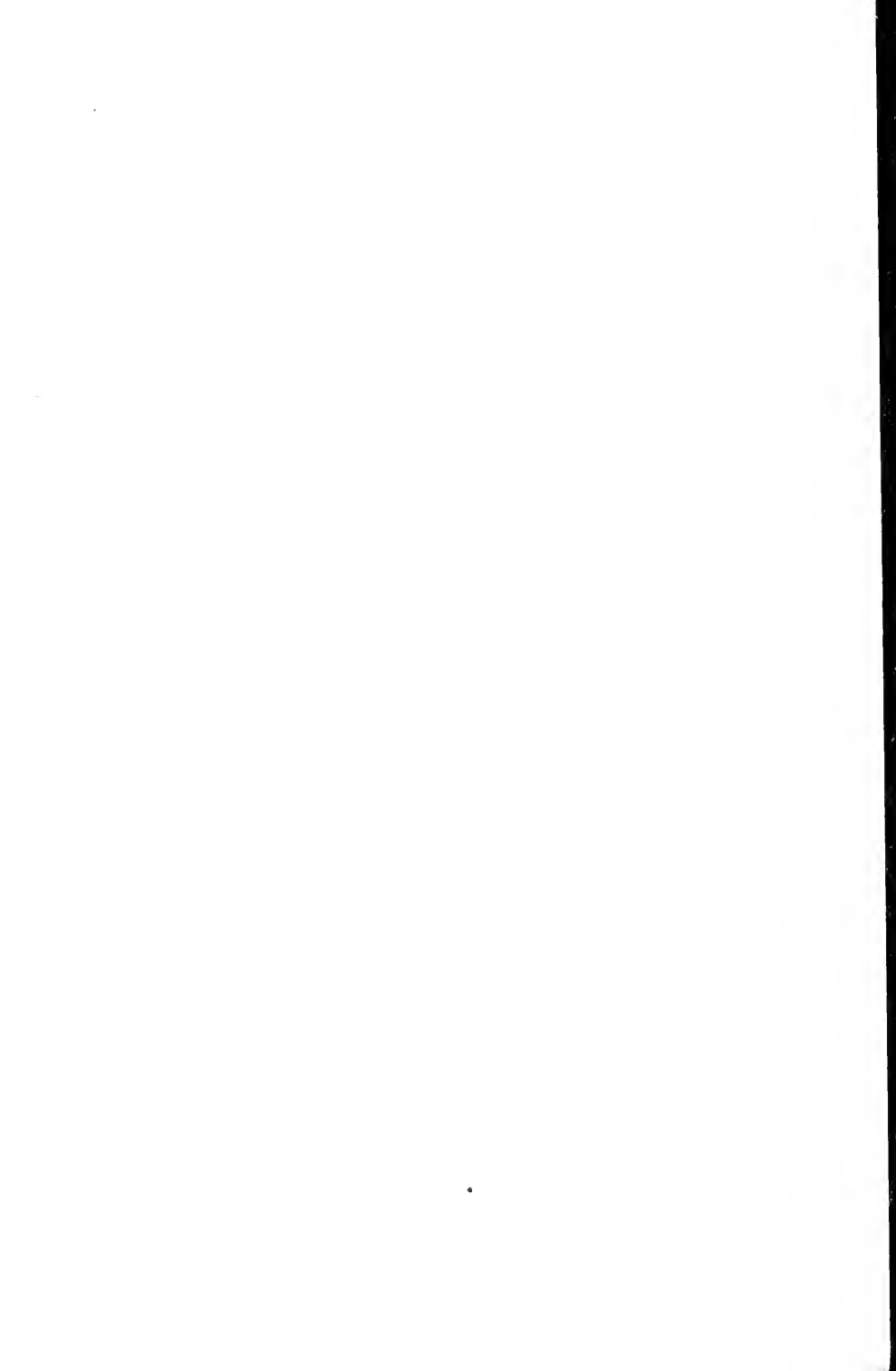
It may surprise some of you to know that slavery ever existed in this place, but this must have been the case, as Sept. 1, 1785, "Catherine, a negro, formerly belonging to Esq. Blodgett, was baptized."

In looking at the way the Lord has led us, during the more than a century of our existence, we have abundant reason for taking courage and pressing forward. The timid seldom win a battle. God said to Joshua, "Be strong and go forward." If Joshua had been a timid man, and there had been no courageous one to take his place, the entrance to the promised land without doubt would

have been delayed for a long time. So there is no question but the church loses many advantages by its timidity, by forgetting that its cause is the Lord's, and that He is with it so far and so long as it follows him.

It does not follow that every act of the church is right, any more than it does that every act of an individual is right. But in reading the records of this church, one will be struck at the wisdom displayed in the most critical periods of its history. Wise counsels *usually* prevailed. There have always been, as now, those who were radical in their ideas, not stopping to look at the consequences; and, on the other hand, there have been conservatives, who never would have had any change, but would do and live precisely as their fathers had. These two classes have acted as a check upon each other, and a wiser course has been pursued than as though either had had full control. In this we can see how the Lord has helped us.

If I should mention the names of some of the early members of this church, few of you would recall them, while the most of you never heard them. "Our fathers where are they?" They have fulfilled their earthly mission and entered into their reward. Formerly they travelled these roads, or roamed over these hills and through this pleasant valley, with as much animation as we, as full of hope, as full of the consciousness of their own importance as we. Some of them have now been sleeping for two or three generations, and their dust, even, could not be found, though sought with greatest care. Soon we shall be numbered with them. We are full of life and hope to-day, but not one of us will live to see the next centennial. We shall take our places in the dust, but the world and its affairs will run on all the same. Some hearts will bleed when we are removed, but the surging mass will not long mind it. It is an unpleasant thought,—tending to humility; and though I would not have you gloomy, I would have you think of it.



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